

# VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

## WORKFORCE PLAN

JUNE 2004

### I OVERVIEW

- **Mission:** In partnership with people with disabilities and their families, the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services collaborates with the public and private sectors to provide and advocate for the highest quality services that empower individuals with disabilities to maximize their employment, independence and full inclusion into society.
- **Core Responsibilities/Programs:** The Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services Program can be divided into the broad divisions of Disability Determination Services, Field Rehabilitation Services, Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center, and Central Office which includes Community Based Services. Organizational objectives and descriptions of each of these functions follows:

**Disability Determination Services** works in partnership with the Social Security Administration (SSA) to provide accurate, timely decisions on claims for disability benefits. DDS provides accurate, timely, efficient and cost effective evaluations of medical evidence related to claims filed by citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia for benefits under Title II and Title XVI of the Social Security Act, as well as Title XIX Medicaid claims. These evaluations result in the adjudication or “determination” of claims at the initial claims stage, the continuing disability review stage and other appellate points in the disability adjudicative process.

This unit is comprised of an Administrative Office, consisting of the DDS administrator and key department coordinators, and four Regional Offices. Each Regional Office operates under the supervision of a Regional Director and in accordance with the requirements of state agency and federal operating procedures.

The Social Security Administration instituted the disability program in order to provide benefits to citizens who are unable to work due to a severe medically determinable impairment. SSA criteria for benefit qualification states that in order to qualify for benefits, the individual must be unable to perform substantial gainful activity due to a medically determinable impairment which has lasted or is expected to last at least twelve consecutive months or result in death. SSA established the policies and procedures the DDS must follow in the processing of disability claims.

Claims for disability benefits are sent from SSA field offices around the state to one of four regional DDS offices. DDS is responsible for obtaining all medical and other pertinent information regarding each claimant. DDS is also responsible for obtaining a current medical and /or psychological status on each claimant if there is insufficient information within the accessible medical records or if no current medical records exist. Once all pertinent information is obtained, the DDS analysts, in consultation with state agency consultants, determine eligibility for benefits using SSA Disability Program regulations and guidelines.

The **Field Rehabilitative Services Division (FRS)** operates the Virginia Vocational Rehabilitation Program (VR) for individuals with disabilities other than visual impairments. The FRS mission is: In partnership with people with disabilities, the DRS Field Rehabilitation Services Division assists individuals with disabilities to make informed choices that will maximize their positive employment outcomes through a coordinated and integrated service delivery system.

The VR program operates through a decentralized structure that includes thirty-six field offices, five regional offices, an administrative unit in the central office and two rehabilitation engineering fabrication facilities. The field/regional/central office hierarchy has existed over the years with only slight modifications. The number of regions has increased from two to four regions and then expanded to five regions. Geographical boundaries for regions and field office coverage have moved repeatedly in attempts to conform to regional boundaries of other agencies or to equalize workloads. Attempts have been made to reduce the number of field offices, but ultimately, few offices have been closed as transportation problems make it difficult for many consumers to access services that are not available in or near their communities.

There is little ambiguity about the division mission, vision and objectives. We are, and will be, about achieving employment outcomes for persons with disabilities. Shifts in resources have been designed to support this as a priority and to place as many resources as possible at the intersection between the consumer and the direct service provider. Performance measures for the division have remained the same for many years. They are:

- Number of Employment Plans Initiated
- Number of Cases Closed with the Consumer Successfully Employed
- Consumer Wages
- Percent of Consumers Engaged in Competitive Employment
- Percent of Consumers with Significant Disabilities

**Central Office Administration** provides administrative support to Agency 262 (Department of Rehabilitative Services), 263 (Virginia Rehabilitative Center for the Blind, 606 (Virginia Board for People with Disabilities), 702 (Department of the Blind and Vision Impaired), and 751 (Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing). Administrative support is provided in areas of Fiscal Services, Human Resources, Policy and Planning, Procurement and Information Systems. In addition to administrative support, Central Office Administration includes the Community Based Services Division of DRS, which provides direct client service through state funded programs and provides support and resources to Vocational Rehabilitation consumers and to other persons with disabilities through funding for Centers for Independent Living, Virginia Assistive Technology System, Assistive Technology Loan Fund and other grant funded initiatives. Community Based Services programs allow individuals with the most severe disabilities to live independently and, in many cases, obtain and maintain employment. Strong support for these community based services, versus nursing home or other institutional care, exists in state government and the disability community.

Community Based Services staff are available to provide technical assistance and consultation in a wide variety of areas, including assistive technology, accessing community based services and spinal cord injury services, case management for people who have long term needs, accessing available resources and loans for Assistive Technology, disability services boards and the ADA.

**Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center (WWRC)** is a public, nonprofit facility operated by the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS). The Center is available for persons with physical, mental, and emotional disabilities and those in need of multiple services. Comprehensive services that require an interdisciplinary approach are provided on a residential and outpatient basis through a variety of programs and services. WWRC's Employment and Occupational Skills Training Department provides vocational training in growth occupations to prepare individuals with disabilities for competitive entry level employment.

WWRC is a modern campus-style facility that is internationally known for developing new ideas and techniques for the advancement and independence of persons with disabilities and is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). Its Vocational Training Programs are accredited by the Accrediting Commission of the Council on Occupational Education (COE). WWRC also serves as a State Operated Secondary Educational Program, as endorsed by the Virginia Department of Education and a Post-Secondary Educational Institution by the U. S. Department of Education. Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center provides a comprehensive array of therapeutic medical rehabilitative services using a transdisciplinary approach. These services are available to all individuals with disabilities who are enrolled in medical and/or vocational rehabilitation programs either as non-residential outpatients or as outpatients residing at WWRC using any of the housing options available.

The transdisciplinary team, together with the consumer and any involved caregivers, develops an individualized therapeutic medical rehabilitation program focused on meeting that consumer's specific needs and rehabilitation goals to enable the consumer to achieve the highest desired level of self-sufficiency possible in preparation for community integration and vocational pursuits.

WWRC's Medical Rehabilitation Services Division is licensed to provide services by Medicare, Medicaid, Blue Cross/Blue Shield and is certified as a Comprehensive Outpatient Rehabilitation Facility (CORF).

All medical service providers are certified by their professional organizations and licensed or certified by the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The mission of WWRC Vocational Services is to successfully assist individuals with disabilities in becoming prepared for employment, higher education, and/or other career development goals by maximizing employment, occupational, and self-sufficiency skills through the integration of rehabilitation, occupation, and education/training technology.

Qualified instructional and support staff deliver integrated curricula and instruction utilizing state-of-the-art occupational related equipment and technologies to meet job market demands and individual consumer learning needs. Business and industry advisory committees provide instrumental guidance and direction to overall training programs and services and serve as partners in course planning, curricula development, consumer preparation, and program evaluation.

WWRC presently offers nine (9) on-site occupational skills training programs, representing more than thirty-five (35) different vocational objectives. The External Training Option (ETO) provides training in over 100 occupational areas in the local community surrounding WWRC, with expansions to consumer home communities in progress. In addition, modified training programs are available, upon request, for anyone desiring training in a vocation that is not a part of the typical course offerings, or who requires selective placement for disability related reasons. Training curricula may be abbreviated or adapted for these consumers. Full course descriptions and program completion requirements can be found in Appendix D.

The Student Internship Program (SIP) provides opportunities to determine if trainees are job-ready. Interns are typically placed with employers across the state in the last four to six weeks of vocational training. The internship experience reduces anxiety participants may face on a job, provides actual work experience and serves as a final evaluation of training success. In the local area alone, more than 100 employers participate in the Student Internship Program annually. In addition, consumers may enroll in internship experiences which take place in their home communities. This statewide Student Internship Program is coordinated by sponsors, Center counselors and Vocational Training Department staff.

- **DRS Values:**

- We value creative problem solving, collaboration, and teamwork in recognizing and responding to customer needs.
- We value services that are customer focused.
- We value customer, partner, and employee input to continually improve processes, services and results.
- We value accessibility, awareness of the needs of people with disabilities, and advocacy for resources to meet those needs.
- We value fairness, respect, and responsiveness in our actions and communications.
- We value recognizing and rewarding excellence and innovation, and the continuous development of all staff.
- We value providing the highest quality services, while maintaining fiscal responsibility.
- We value a secure work environment, employee health and wellness, and diversity in our workforce.
- We value honesty, integrity, and ethical behavior.